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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes research on teacher effectiveness in social studies classrooms. Observations were conducted in a large urban school district on the west coast of the United States, as well as in selected classrooms in Australia, New Zealand, Poland, and Germany since 1991. Effective teachers are those for whom there is evidence that students are not only learning, but also express an interest in the subjects they are taught. Observations were reinforced with end-of-semester questionnaires and in-depth interviews with each teacher and with randomly selected students in each class observed. The purposes of the research was two-fold: (1) to gain as accurate and detailed an impression as possible of what happens on a more or less regular basis in these classroom; and (2) to document how effective and non-effective teachers in these classrooms differ. Behaviors and characteristics of effective social studies teachers include: (1) they all have high (sometimes extremely high) expectations for their students; (2) they all stress depth rather than coverage of the course content; (3) they all are able to explain things clearly to their students; (4) they all are good listeners; (5) they all demonstrate remarkable patience; (6) they all vary the kinds of things they do and the kinds of activities in which they engage students in class; (7) they all possess incredible amounts of energy; and (8) they all display a considerable command of their subject matter and are able to relate to a variety of daily life examples. (EH)

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Characteristics and Behaviors of Effective Social Studies Teachers in Selected Countries

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Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting
of the National Council for the Social Studies
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Characteristics and Behaviors of Effective Social Studies Teachers in Selected Countries[1]

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In what ways do effective[2] teachers differ from those who are ineffective? Do they actually teach differently than their less effective counterparts; that is, do they employ different kinds of behaviors with students? Do they possess certain characteristics that ineffective teachers do not? These questions have interested me ever since I taught high school social studies back in the late 1960s. At that time, I thought that the kind of students or the subject one taught might be a determining factor in how one taught. This is not to say that teachers who teach different subjects or students of widely differing abilities do not teach their subjects and students in different ways. They do. But effective teachers appear to behave and teach in remarkably similar ways, regardless of where, what, or who they teach. In this article, I wish to report on some of the research I have been doing in the last few years that I think bears out this conclusion.

Since the fall semester of 1991, I have begun to document and describe the behaviors and activities of students and teachers in several social studies classrooms in a large urban school district on the west coast of the United States. I have also made similar observations in classrooms in selected cities in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and Poland. What I observed in these other countries has served to corroborate what I observed in schools in the United States and has served to reinforce my conclusions. In this paper, I shall present a summary of my data and

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[1] This paper is a slightly modified version of one presented at the Triannual Network Conference, Network Educational Science Amsterdam (NESA), in Budapest, Hungary, September, 1993.

[2] Effective teachers are those for whom there is evidence that students are not only learning, but also express an interest in the material they are taught. Such evidence includes such things as paying attention in class, completing homework assignments accurately and on time, attending class regularly, participating intelligently in class discussions, passing examinations with satisfactory marks, etc.

describe the conclusions I have (tentatively) reached; in another paper,[3] I intend to describe in greater detail the methodology I employed.

Methodology

Each semester, using a variety of methods and instruments to collect my data,[4] I have observed at least four classes[5] twice per week over for three-months in several high schools (grades 9-12) in the San Francisco Bay Area, and interviewed the teachers, plus a sample of students, in these classes.[6] The high schools in which I observed differ in some respects, but these differences in the main have little to do (at least directly) with what goes on in classrooms. Here I shall describe only two of the schools in detail since they are firly typical of most of the schools in which I made my observations. My intent was and continues to be twofold:

(a) to gain as accurate and detailed an impression as possible of what happens on a more or less regular basis in these classrooms; and

(b) to document how effective and non-effective teachers in these classrooms differ.

As a follow-up to end-of-semester questionnaires that I administered, I conducted in-depth interviews[7] with each teacher , as well as with a randomly selected sample of students from each class observed. During these interviews, I

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[3]Accepted for presentation at this year's (i.e., the 1995) AERA meeting in San Francisco.

[4]I have been keeping a daily log in which I record the comments and describe the behaviors of both students and teachers. When appropriate, I also have prepared flow-charts of student-teacher and/or student-student comments; time and motion logs of student behaviors; tally sheets of the kinds of questions students ask and answer; sociograms of power relationships that exist; and/or rating scales on which students rate different teacher activities). I also am administering an end-of-semester questionnaire to all students which asks them to indicate whether or not various activities occur in their classroom (e.g., weekly discussions of current events); if they do, how often they occur; and rate the quality of those which occur frequently.

[5] At least one 9th grade geography, 10th grade World Civilizations, 11th grade U.S. History, and/or 12th grade government or economics class each semester.

[6] The work reported here is but a part of a larger body of ongoing research. Some of this research has been previously reported. See J. R. Fraenkel. (1994). A portrait of four social studies teachers and their classes: With special attention paid to identification of teaching techniques and behaviors that contribute to student learning. Dennis S. Tierney (Ed.). *1994 Yearbook of California Education Research.* San Francisco: Caddo Gap Press.

[7] Each interview was tape recorded and lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

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encouraged both students and teachers to talk at length about what they thought was happening in their classrooms and what they liked and disliked. I also asked them the following questions:

For teachers:

- What expectations do you have for your students?
- What, for you, constitutes good or effective teaching?
- What, for you, constitutes poor or ineffective teaching?
- Do you teach the students in honors classes any differently than you do students in non honors classes? If so, how?
- How would you characterize today's students?
- How do you feel about teaching after all these years?

For students:

- Do you like social studies? Why or why not?
- How would you define a good social studies teacher?
- How would you define a poor social studies teacher?
- Would you like to be a social studies teacher yourself? Why or why not?

To summarize:

- Both teachers and students were observed to identify the teachers' style of teaching; to record the sorts of comments the teachers made to students (and vice-versa), and the remarks that occurred among students; and to chart the nature and frequency of various classroom activities. All observation periods were approximately 45 minutes in length and comprised the entire class.

- All teachers were interviewed at length (for approximately one hour) about their philosophy of teaching; the expectations they had for their students; their teaching style; the image they had of themselves as a teacher; how they thought they were perceived by students; the image they had of students, and what they would change about themselves if they were able to do so.

- A random sample of students were interviewed to determine the perceptions of their teacher; what they believed their teacher did well; their perception of the teacher's shortcomings; what they liked and disliked about their social studies class, and why, and whether or not they themselves would ever want to be a social studies teacher. The purpose of the interviews was not only to allow students and teachers to describe the teacher's style, but also to check my perceptions of what I observed the teachers doing against their own and their students' perceptions of what was happening in class.

- Documents (lesson plans, tests, teacher's notes, student notebooks, written assignments, products such as maps, etc.) were examined to assess the relationship

or lack thereof between the teacher's assignments and his or her lesson and course objectives.

Although the sample of classes I observed to date has been small, it includes students and teachers from five different countries with similar results being observed in each country. Accordingly, I have formed some tentative conclusions about what constitutes effective social studies teaching at the high school level, and what effective social studies teachers do that ineffective ones do not. I shall describe some of these differences later in the paper.

Similarities and Differences

The schools in which I am observing are similar in many ways. All are situated on the outskirts of large cities (i.e., they are city schools, but they are not located downtown). All have fairly large student bodies (total n's range from approximately 1800 to almost 2000). All contain students in all four of the grades 9-12, each has a freshman, sophomore, junior and senior class. All schools have identical requirements for graduation: four years of English; two years of a lab science; two years of mathematics; two years of physical education, one year of the visual or performing arts, one year of a foreign language, and three years of social studies.

The social studies requirement in the two schools that I shall now describe is identical (a year of world civilizations; a year of U. S. history; a semester of American government; and a semester of economics). Both offer a wide variety of elective courses that students can take. Both possess a core of experienced teachers who have been teaching on the average for 20 years or more.[8]

The composition of the social studies classes in these schools was also found to be similar in several respects. Average class size is somewhere between 30 and 35

[8] The information presented here applies only to the schools in the United States. Demographic information could not be obtained from the European, Australian or New Zealand schools, although my observation and informal convesations with faculty in these schools led me to conclude that they were similar in the aforementioned ways.

students per class. The teachers are predominantly (approximately 75%) male, older (the average age is 45 years), and have been teaching for some time.[9][10] All wearere experienced professionals. The size, layout, and contents of the rooms where instruction is given are essentially the same. The intra-school average GPAs of the students is very similar, although the inter-school average GPA of the students differs considerably

The schools do differ markedly in the percentage of different ethnic groups that make up the student body; for example, the ethnic group with the largest percentage of students in one school is Chinese. They comprise slightly more than 42 percent of all students attending the school,. The largest ethnic group attending the other school is black. They comprise slightly more than 23 percent of all students attending that school. To illustrate, Table One reveals the gender and ethnic breakdown for the two schools I am describing.

Table One
Gender and Ethnic Breakdown in Two Schools

	School A (N=1832)	School B (N=1974)
Gender		
Female	1,048 (57.2%)	1,074 (54.4%)
Male	784 (42.8%)	900 (46.6%)
Ethnic breakdown*		
Spanish speaking	134 (7.3%)	334 (16.9%)
Other white	311 (17.0%)	334 (16.9%)
Black	73 (4.0%)	460 (23.3%)
Chinese	775 (42.3%)	389 (19.7%)
Japanese	37 (2.0%)	24 (1.2%)
Korean	64 (3.5%)	20 (1.0%)
American Indian	6 (0.3%)	12 (0.6%)
Filipino	191 (10.4%)	168 (8.5%)
Other non white	244 (13.3%)	235 (11.9%

[9] The longest for more than 30 years; the youngest for 15 years.
[10] The teachers in the European, Australian, and New Zealand schools were 100% male, all over 40 years of age, and had all taught for a minimum of 10 years.

A second notable difference between the schools is their overall ambience; for example, as I enter and walk around the first of the two schools described in Table I (school A), I continue to be struck by the seriousness of purpose that seems to permeate the atmosphere. Students sit on the floor outside of their classrooms reading their textbooks. Every chair in the library is occupied. Classrooms are quiet. The movement of students between classes when the periods change is very orderly. The halls, the classrooms, the restrooms are clean. There is very little paper or waste in the courtyards, the halls, or the classrooms.

On the other hand, when I enter school B, I am repeatedly (and immediately) struck by how noisy it is. The halls are crowded with boisterous students jostling, talking, moving, and sitting on the floor between classes (but by no means reading their assignments or preparing for classes). The library is half empty. The students in many classrooms wearere very noisy, talking (but not about their lessons). Furthermore, the place is very dirty. Paper, soft drink cans, and crumpled-up bags litter the halls and and can even be found in the corners of some classrooms. I get the feeling that the students (and the teachers, for that matter) lack pride in their school. I often fell uncomfortable entering school B.

Classes in the two schools also differ in several respects. They are heterogeneous (the students are of mixed ability). The average GPA of the students in the classes varies by as much as one full point (the average GPA of one class was 3.5, while the average GPA of a similar class in another school was 2.8). The gender and ethnic composition of the students varies in different classes, as does the age, ethnicity, gender, and style of the teachers. The classes meet at different times during the day. The teachers have different instructional objectives, use different textbooks, have different sorts and amounts of supplementary materials available, give different types and amounts of homework, engage students in different kinds of activities, and teach different subjects.

Are Different Kinds of Students and Subjects Taught Differently?

What I am most interested in determining is whether teachers who are judged effective,[11] yet who teach students of different abilities and/or different subjects, teach social studies differently. I now believe they do not, at least not in ways that matter. The social studies teachers in the schools I have observed do (to some degree) teach differently, but the differences are more a matter of style than of substance. Individual teachers do teach their classes in different ways. But effective teachers appear to behave and teach in remarkably similar ways, regardless of school, subject, or the ability level of their students.

What are some of these ways? Effective teachers often engage students in discussions rather than give lectures (and when they do lecture, they combine their lectures with pictures, maps, and/or other visuals); they often ask students questions rather than having them recite; they often work with students in small groups (and even place them in dyads) rather than as an entire class; they often ask students to respond to each other instead of to the teacher; and on almost a regular basis, they require students to be active rather than passive learners (e.g., by engaging them in activities such as role playing or giving presentations in class). In short, they make a point to engage students in activities that help them[12] to understand and require them to use the information and ideas they acquire. Effective teachers appear to <u>like</u> what they were doing. They like their students, they like their subject, and they like to teach.

Ineffective teachers, on the other hand, are more likely to present ideas ready-made to students rather than asking them to develop ideas for themselves. They are more likely to talk <u>to</u> students than <u>with</u> them; to maintain a disorderly classroom

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[11] I realize that what constitutes an "effective" teacher is open to debate; however, I would wager that most teachers would agree with me that the evidence mentioned in footnote #2 would indicate that an effective teacher is present.

[12] In both my judgment and that of their students.

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with lots of noise and confusion rather than an orderly one where students can concentrate; they are less likely to demand that students pay attention, or to wake up sleeping students. They [redacted] more likely to have discipline problems, and less likely to resolve those problems quickly and appropriately. They are less likely to have a clear-cut sense of where they are heading. They are more likely to engage students in busywork, to stress the memorization and regurgitation of facts rather than the understanding of ideas. Students are rarely active learners in their classes. These teachers do not appear to like what they are [redacted] doing; often they do not seem to like their students, and rarely do they seem to be having any fun.

I have witnessed some remarkable teaching in every country in every school in which I observed. I also have witnessed some that has left me depressed for hours afterward. But neither the ability level of the class, the subject taught, the ethnicity of the students, nor the gender and ethnicity of the teacher seem to be a distinguishing characteristic that differentiates the effective from the ineffective. Good teaching appears to be remarkably similar no matter where it occurs (although it does not occur as frequently as one would wish).

This fact--that good teaching appears to transcend the ability level of students or the subject matter taught has surprised me. I intuitively thought, before I began this research, that ability level would certainly make a difference in the ways a teacher would relate to students. Similarly, I thought that a subject like economics would certainly be taught differently than a subject like cultural geography. But such does not appear to be the case, at least not in the classes I have observed so far. In the remainder of the paper, therefore, I wish to describe some of the most notable behaviors and characteristics that I now believe effective teachers possess that ineffective teachers lack.

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Behaviors and Characteristics of Effective Social Studies Teachers

Effective social studies teachers do certain things (or do these things to a greater extent), and they possess certain characteristics, that ineffective teachers do not. They behave in remarkably similar ways, regardless of students, subjects, or schools. As a check against subconscious bias on my part, I have applied triangulation analysis by classifying each behavior or characteristic by data source (O=observation; I=interview; and S=student interview). All of the behaviors and characteristics listed have been identified by at least two sources, either through independent verification (that is, the behavior or characteristic was observed prior to being mentioned in an interview, or was mentioned in an interview without any direct prompting or questioning by me); or through dependent identification (by identifying the behavior or characteristic either by direct questioning in an interview or through observing the behavior or characteristic after it was mentioned in an interview).

Some of the most salient of the characteristics and behaviors of effective teachers are the following:.

• They all have high (sometimes extremely high) expectations for their students. Effective teachers let their students know in no uncertain words that they always can do better. They keep pushing them to try harder, to go a little bit further, to "go for the gold," and not to settle for less than their very best. Here are the remarks of Robert Townsend[13], a 45-year-old black male who has been teaching social studies for more than 20 years. He told me that he has taught "every kind of social studies course there is." I observed him teaching an eleventh-grade class in United States history. I asked him what expectations he had for his students:

> *I want them to do well in life. Nobody can guarantee this, of course, but I try to stress that information is important for them to acquire. They*

[13] The names of the students and teachers in this paper are not their real names.

don't all buy this, of course, but I keep pushing it. The important thing is that they know I expect them to work hard in my course. I give homework pretty regularly, but I do my best to make it make sense to them. I always try to explain how what I am talking about ties in with their world and their lives. I want my students to be able to make sense out of the world in which they live. The world is a pretty scary place for an adolescent, you know, and I want to help them come to grips, so far as I can, with what they do not understand.

•They all stress depth rather than coverage. Effective teachers continually try to relate facts together, to help their students grasp an underlying idea rather than asking them to acquire facts without connecting them in some way. Read the comments of Alice Tom, a 50-year-old Asian female. She has been teaching social studies for 17 years. She says she "loves history." I observed her teaching an eleventh grade honors class in twentieth century world history. I asked her what she tried to stress in her classes.

I think you have to deal with a period or a topic in detail, in depth. Not just cover it. What is important is to see how the events that have occurred connect, or at least to try and see if they do. How do they tie together? I think ideas are more important than facts. Oh, facts are important, you have to know some facts, but I am most interested in helping them look for how facts connect. I teach concepts--you know, like cooperation. Like how the colonists cooperated to help defeat the British in the Revolutionary War, and that the important thing to think about is when and why cooperation is effective. Then I ask them to look for examples in their own lives--in the newspapers, at school--of cooperation. We've studied the Revolutionary War but when we study the Civil War, I will want them to try to identify examples of

> *cooperation that occurred then. The important thing is to help students get at this concept in depth, and to do that you have got to look at a lot of examples. Well, two or three anyway (laughs).*

The students picked this up, too. Here is what one student had to say about Ms. Tom:

> *Ms. Tom is terrific. I like here a lot. She doesn't just teach us facts, you know. She kind of shows you how they go together. She has us do exercises where we put things together, you know, and then try to label them?*[14] *She is always asking us how this relates to that. It is hard, but a lot better than what I had in social studies last year.*

Contrast that with the following comments by an ineffective teacher:

> *I am tired of all this stuff about concepts. Students need information, and that means facts. We have a lot of ignoramuses walking around this world, and I do not intend to contribute to producing any more of them. I want to fill my kids up with facts. There is so much they need to know, and the schools don't have much time to waste. Nothing turns me off faster than some wise-guy student trying to argue with me over something he knows nothing about.*

• They all are able to explain things clearly to their students. Effective teachers explain the ideas they are trying to teach in language that their students can understand. They are able to clarify what they are trying to say with examples that make sense to students. This is very important--they use lots of examples that relate to their students' lives. Although some of these teachers are primarily lecturers, they intersperse their lectures with questions to the class that ask about points in their reading or for an example of something related to what the class is studying. They use frequent examples and try to relate events from the past to what is

[14] A reference to the concept formation strategy initially pioneered by Hilda Taba.

happening today. Here is what one student had to say about one such teacher (in Australia):

> *She makes it (history) make sense. I understand what she tells us, and if we don't get what is in the book, she can explain it to us so that we get it, you know.*

Contrast the above remark with the following, expressed by another student in the United States about a teacher she judged ineffective:

> *Half of the time I don't understand what in the hell he is talking about. He talks about all of this stuff that makes no sense to me and whenever I ask him a question, he gives me a bunch of gobbledygook that makes no sense. I don't like civics and I don't like this class cause most of the stuff we are supposed to learn is just dumb--I don't see how it affects me, and Mr. Johnson can't tell me.*

• They all are good listeners. When students talk, effective teachers listen. They listen to what the students have to say and try to respond appropriately. They have good wait time. They not only encourage their students to talk, but they convey to them that they want to hear what the students have to say, and they are willing to wait for a sufficient time to allow them to say it. Here is what one student had to say in this regard aabout a teacher in New Zealand:

> *You know what I like most about Mrs. McNaughton? She listens to you--she shows you respect. She knows your name and recognizes you in the halls, and always says hello, and is willing to listen to your problems and to stuff, even if it is not about geography.*

• They all demonstrate remarkable patience. This is evidenced by the willingness of the effective teachers to explain things over and over again when students do not understand. I commented about this to Larry Donner, a 55-year-old, Caucasian male who said he has been teaching social studies for 30 years and who

had "loved every minute of it." I observed him teaching a twelfth grade economics class. When I commented on how extremely patient I thought he was, he replied:

> *Well, you can't explain things to them if you don't know what they don't understand, and you've got to find out. I learned a long time ago that just plain waiting, sometimes even for a couple of minutes, without saying anything, often would open some kids up. If they know that you want to hear what they have to say, and are willing to wait for them to get it out, they eventually will get it out. Did you notice how I often say, "Come on, now let me hear ya?" Well that works, not for all, of course, but for a lot of them.*

• They all vary the kinds of things they do and the kinds of activities in which they engage students in class. It should be noted here that it is not the fact that the more ineffective teachers never use some of the techniques or activities used by the effective teachers. It was the fact that they do not use them very much. It seems also to be the case that an activity can be used too much. Ineffective teachers use films, for example, too often, as the following comment from a student reveals:

> *All we do in history is watch movies. I like movies, but some of them we see in class have nothing that I can see to do with what we are studying. We have a movie a week, sometimes twice. Course I don't mind too much cause the class is so boring and you can at least sleep while the movie is on.*

Compare the above remark with one from this by another student about an effective teacher:

> *He doesn't just go by the book. He gives you lots of examples from real life; he brings in his slides and pictures that he has taken all over the world. We see films and filmstrips, and hear records about the times,*

about the music and what people were saying, and play games, and work in groups, do case comparisons--all kinds of stuff. I didn't ever like history, but I do now. Mr. Abercrombie is the kind of teacher whose classes you want to take again and again. He knows an awful lot, and he makes it fascinating.

Table Two presents a summary of how frequently various types of activities occur in the classrooms of effective and non-effective teachers:

Table Two
How Frequently Various Classroom Activities Occurred in the Classrooms of Effective and Ineffective Social Studies Teachers

Activity	Effective	Ineffective
Teacher lecture	Occasionally	Frequently
Discussions led by teacher	Frequently	Rarely
Films	Occasionally	Frequently
Filmstrips	Occasionally	Rarely
Slides	Occasionally	Never
Use of transparencies by teacher	Frequently	Never
Small group work	Frequently	Rarely
Student-led discussions	Frequently	Rarely
Debates	Occasionally	Never
Student presentations	Frequently	Rarely
Silent reading in class	Never	Frequently
Reading from text by students in class	Never	Frequently
Guest speakers	Occasionally	Never
Dittoed worksheets	Never	Frequently
Use of multiple text sources	Occasionally	Never
Field trips	Occasionally	Never

Key: "Never" indicates that I did not see any evidence of this activity during the time I observedthese teachers. "Occasionally" indicates that the activity was observed to occur no more than once every two weeks during the observation period. "Frequently" indicates that the activity was observed to occur no more than once every two weeks during the observation period.

• They all possess incredible amounts of energy. Effective teachers spend a great deal of time preparing the lessons they are to teach.[15] Furthermore, they move

[15] One teacher remarked that he gets to school every morning about 6:15 a.m. (his first class begins at 7:35 a.m.), and that he spends three hours after school, plus most of Saturday, grading papers and preparing for forthcoming classes.

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around their rooms continually (pointing to maps and/or other materials, pulling out dictionaries and other reference materials, etc.). They are almost constantly in motion while class is in session.

•They all display a considerable command of their subject matter and are able to relate it to a variety of daily life examples. These teachers know their subject, and they can communicate what they know. They also are continually learning, taking classes, participating in conferences, attending workshops and summer institutes, and buying books and materials on their own to keep abreast of new developments in their subject field. All of the ones that I observed had advanced degrees in their subjects. Three students commented about this:

•He knows his subject really well.

•She knows a lot of stuff about geography, and makes it interesting for you.

•The man knows what he is talking about!

What impresses me is that all of the effective teachers I observed operate remarkably similarly regardless of the type of students or the subject matter they teach. Over and over again, I have observed similar behaviors and characteristics by these teachers, and heard students in their interviews identify them (see Table Three):

(1) They ask questions of students more than they lecture to them;

(2) Their lessons focus on important ideas;

(3) They have a sense of humor, and they laugh and joke with students;

(4) They go out of their way to establish personal contact with students;

(5) They encourage discussion of ideas almost every day;

(6) They engage students in small group work that requires cooperation;

(7) They demonstrate no bias against students of a differing ethnicity, gender or ability;

(8) They know their subject matter, but they do not teach all that they know;

(9) They deliberately encourage students to take risks by encouraging the students to state publicly what they do not know (the teachers do this as well) and the anxieties they have that are related to their lack of knowledge; and

(10) They encourage students to discuss their thoughts.

Table Three
Characteristics and Behaviors
Of Effective Social Studies Teachers

- A sense of humor
- Ability to explain ideas clearly
- Fairness
- Asks questions frequently
- Exams require high-level thinking
- Looks for connections between facts
- Encourages all students to participate
- Tells students they can do better
- Uses variety of methodologies
- Tailors work to different ability levels
- Maintains orderly classroom
- Maintains quiet classroom
- Friendly, but firm (not a "buddy")
- Energy
- Thoughtfulness
- Goal oriented
- Knowledgeable re: subject matter

Here is how one teacher (in Germany) summarized for me what to him is the essence of good teaching:

> *A good teacher is one who is fair, who knows something, who has something to say, but who also knows that you can't teach everything you know. You've also got to have a sense of humor, to be able to laugh at yourself and with these kids; not to take yourself too seriously; but teach them something. And run a fairly tight ship. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't mean to be an autocrat. But you do need to maintain order, to set up an atmosphere that enables students to learn. And you have to help them face up to the fact that there is a lot they don't know, to help them know what they don't know.*

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Conclusion

None of the above is probably surprising in that most of the information collected on these teachers tends to validate some of the commonly held perceptions of what constitutes effective teaching. It is not surprising that effective teachers have a sense of humor, or can explain ideas clearly, or encourage their students to participate, or maintain an orderly classroom, or are fair in their dealings with students, or that they display any of the other characteristics and behaviors listed in Table Three. Most of us would probably be surprised if this were not the case. On the other hand, some of my findings raise issues that are not commonly considered in the dialogue on effective teaching. Five of these in particular deserve a further word or two because they describe characteristics or require skills not normally sought after or taught in teacher training programs.

First is the extent to which effective teachers encourage students to take public risks by discussing their mistakes and/or confusion with their classmates. Some of the effective teachers go even further by encouraging students to publicly acknowledge not only their confusion, but the anxieties they hold related to their mistakes or misunderstandings. One even required that her students restate self-deprecating statements they made into more positive remarks (e.g., changing a statement such as "I'm just stupid, I guess," to "I don't know, I'm confused, but I am an intelligent person, so I have to rethink this"). Effective teachers triy to learn something about the background of their students so that they can tailor their work requests and assignments accordingly.

Second, effective teachers are willing to establish personal contact with their students. They deliberately seek eye contact, learn their students' names early in the semester, discuss their own life experiences and relate anecdotes about their own lives, bring in pictures of their families, tell jokes on occasion, and let students

know that they are available for one-to-one interviews. All frequently share their personal views and feelings about topics and issues with students.

Third, effective teachers place considerable emphasis on bringing to light the thought processes engaged in by students, not only by emphasizing the importance of product (i.e., trying to find out as much as one can about the world in which one lives), but also by stressing the importance of process, that is, how one thinks (e.g., "Are you asking yourself what is the main point of the author's argument?"). Effective teachers continually encourage students to explore their own thought processes, in effect, "to think about how they think about things."

Fourth, effective teachers consciously arrange for frequent social interaction among students through small group assignments that require a cooperative effort. Many that I observed have on-going discussion groups to which students are assigned and with which they work on a regular basis. Several change the composition of the groups frequently to broaden the circle of acquaintances with which students interact. Almost all commented in my interviews with them that they view social interaction as a main goal of instruction.

Lastly, effective teachers quickly and deliberately attend to non-verbal cues as indicators of confusion and/or anxiety, and react accordingly by providing further or different explanations, alternative assignments, and so forth.

Some of these characteristics or behaviors require skills and abilities not normally expected of high school teachers. Encouraging students to take public risks requires a teacher experienced in handling potentially awkward situations. Helping students explore their thinking processes requires a skill that cannot be acquired without experience, practice, and probably training. Realizing that one can teach too much requires a sense of what is essential, along with the ability to refrain from telling all one knows about a topic. Going out of one's way to establish personal contact with students requires a willingness to do so. Teaching students to look for

relationships and connections requires a style that many teachers have not previously been exposed to, and for which few models can be found.

The sample upon which the aforementioned observations are based is fairly small (n=20 classes), and so I make no claim that what I am finding will also be found in other schools in this or in any other school district. Nevertheless, similar behaviors and characteristics were observed in social studies classrooms in five different countries. This provides considerable food for thought. Should my findings be born out by subsequent research with many more social studies classes, in other schools and in other countries, this would seem to have considerable import for social studies education. If good teaching does indeed transcend schools, subjects, and students and if, indeed, there are a certain set of core behaviors, characteristics, skills, and abilities that effective teachers possess, we need to concentrate on ways of helping teachers in training (not to mention those already in the profession who wish to improve their performance) acquire these characteristics, behaviors skills, and abilities. On the one hand, this may well require us to change how we train future teachers or on the other hand, it may even require us to be far more careful about who we encourage to become teachers in the first place. Not everyone, it now seems apparent, can teach effectively. We should help those who have the potential to do so.